IRC-Requirements

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11 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Priorities for Automatic Data Processing

1. The question of establishing priorities for data processing users or applications was raised at a recent briefing of the Executive Director. First, it should be noted that processing requests are presently classified into six different priority categories, each representing a different level of urgency. Moreover, the 5 year ADP Plan provides a general scheme of priorities, 3 categories, for all major ADP applications or projects in the Agency.

2. Although the ADP Plan permitted us enough insight to make gross divisions of activity by priority, it did not permit the detailed inspection of the content and processing requirements for each application which are needed to make a more definitive attempt at priorities. In the course of implementation of the Plan, we are presently developing an applications register. This data when complete will provide a further means of evaluating the worth of and method for priority assignment.

3. I put the problem immediately above because, I have become increasingly impressed that detailed establishment of priorities is more a trap than an easy path. You will hear no objection from the processors, because external establishment of priorities removes the pressure from them. Customers will find nothing but fault with whatever system is established. We may be able to reduce the noise level if the club we swing is large enough, for example the DCI.

4. The problem is more complex than simply the general urgency of the application. Any given application is routinely processing information at 3 to 5 different levels of urgency under present arrangements. Certain activities, admittedly low on the priority scale, must be scheduled into relatively slack periods to assure processing at present. The latter must be done, however,

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in any scheme to maintain the utility and viability of the application. Thus any priority scheme must extend below the level of a specific application and, at any given time, must provide processing for all of the applications for which there is a valid requirement.

5. I set out these conditions to indicate the complexity of the problem and the need for probity in attacking it. We must avoid a common failure of building large processing queues which are simply never dissolved. This can be done by adjusting processing power to need as the latter develops and assuring that there is a perpetual watch over applications to remove those which are no longer needed. In other words need must be treated as an algebraic sum, applications being added and others being subtracted.

6. We are creating a data base to accommodate a priority scheme of the appropriate complexity. We will bring it forward to get the appropriate authority as soon as we have exercised the analysis required to get a reasonably equitable allocation among the conflicting claims outlined above.

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Chief Information Processing Staff

25X1A OPPB/IPS/[redacted]:cap (11 Feb 69)

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